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## A Sick Policy

**B**efore making definitive judgments about Nicaragua as a terrorist state—President Reagan put it on his list of international outlaws—consider testimony of Anne Lifflander, 29, a New York doctor who spent two years in Nicaragua and survived a terrorist attack by the U.S.-sponsored counterrevolutionaries.

On July 23, Lifflander was on a ferry traveling the Escondino River from Rama to Bluefields, a city on Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast, when gunfire hit the ship.

"It was terrible," she says. "People threw themselves on the deck. They were praying and crying and screaming."

In the 15 hellish minutes that followed, three rockets were fired. A government soldier, one of nine aboard, was shot in the face as he stood guarding the bridge. He died two hours later. A civilian construction worker shot through the head died that night.

Dr. Lifflander, a quiet, round-faced 1980 graduate of the State University of New York, identified herself as a doctor to the military commander. Although shot in the arm, he refused treatment and directed her to minister to the civilians. A 9-year-old girl, shot in the leg, went into shock.

Lifflander had no instruments and made do with what fellow passengers could provide as bandages from shirts or slips. In all, 17 were injured, most by shrapnel. The boat limped in to Bluefields, where it was met by ambulances and such medical facilities as the city can provide.

Eden Pastora, a contra leader who has variously accepted and rejected Central Intelligence Agency aid, later took credit for the attack, citing the government soldiers on board. But the boat was being guarded because of a previous attack on the ferry, which had four soldiers aboard.

Pastora, the revolutionary hero who has become the most erratic contra commander, is back in the news because he has kidnaped 29 American "witnesses for peace" traveling the river between Costa Rica and

Nicaragua. He poses an intriguing dilemma for the Reagan administration and a first test of the threat issued a month ago that the United States would hold Nicaragua responsible for violence against Americans in the area. Pastora may be Reagan's idea of a "freedom fighter" but, if kidnaping is not a terrorist act, there is no such thing.

Lifflander had decided to leave

Nicaragua even before bullets flew over her head. After two years with a family in Managua and working in one of the city's below-par hospitals and a pitiful health clinic provided by the Sandinistas, she decided she could do Nicaraguans more good by returning here to try to heal a sick policy. She plans to work part time in a Washington clinic and lobby on Capitol Hill, under the aegis of Nicaragua Network, the liberal anti-contra organization headed by actor Ed Asner.

Since June 12, when the House gave way to presidential bullying and voted them \$27 million in "humanitarian" aid, the contras have grown bolder.

In Lifflander's Managua neighborhood, where she shared a home with Helen Salgado, divorced mother of two daughters, almost every family has a son fighting at the front—"there are funerals all the time." Civilian casualties are mounting. Eight women traveling to visit their sons in an army camp were killed when contras attacked their bus. Seventeen people were injured in what certainly sounds like a terrorist raid.

When she returned to her Managua home after her near-miss with the contras, she expected a "heroine's welcome." But perspective was immediately restored. A neighborhood woman had lost her only son, her sole support. He was in a coffee-harvesting brigade attacked by contras who, after shooting it up, set fire to the brigadistas' truck bearing wounded.

Lifflander does not think that the contras will prevail. "You don't win a military victory by killing eight women," she says, adding that she thinks that Nicaraguans will fight to keep their revolution.

"Helen Salgado was probably better off during the Somoza years. It was easier for her to get hair dye and eyebrow makeup and spare parts for her car. But she remembers the Somozistas and the raping and looting that went on in her neighborhood, and she doesn't want to go back," she says.

Lifflander is one of 25,000 Americans who have spent time in Nicaragua to give a hand to the hard-pressed Sandinistas. But she'll urge students to stay here and try to change the Reagan policy.

"There is so much misinformation," she says, "it has to be stopped here. I don't understand why Congress buys all this emotional nonsense from the president—I'm an internist, not a psychiatrist."